

February 12, 2023

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Laurel LaPorte-Grimes. I am a resident of Manchester and an organizer with Uniting for a Safe Inclusive Community – Manchester and CT Mutual Aid East of the River. I am writing today in full support of H.B. 6616: **An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status**. Last year we took steps toward ensuring that our immigrant community has access to healthcare, and this bill is an additional important step in this direction. I also know that we cannot stop here, with expanding access to care up to the age of 26, and ultimately we need to have access to HUSKY for all immigrants of any age.

I view access to healthcare firstly from the lens of the wife of an immigrant whose family did not have health insurance for many years. Additionally, I have seen our friends and neighbors who are undocumented unable to access the care they and their families need, as well as the physical, emotional, and financial strain this puts on them and their families. Further, I write as an organizer of grassroots community organizations that stand with our undocumented community members and for their human rights.

Health care is a human right. It pains me deeply that members of our community are currently unable to access medically necessary procedures. It is the responsibility of our leaders to ensure that doctors can provide appropriate healthcare and that community members have access to this care, without exception. Seeing our immigrant community members unable to access care is especially painful to me because of their contributions to our communities and our tax base. The work that immigrants do across our state contributes to the ability of others to receive healthcare, and yet they are unable to receive this same care themselves. Additionally, it is costing our state money to not ensure all immigrants have access to healthcare. When uninsured immigrants need healthcare, they must rely on Emergency Rooms to treat conditions that could have been more effectively dealt with by a primary care doctor. We all pay for this through the emergency Medicaid program, to the tune of approximately \$15 million in 2021. And outside of these direct costs, hospitals could potentially save close to \$63.3 million dollars in reduced uncompensated care costs, making them more viable and able to continue to offer care for us all. Ensuring that our immigrant community members are cared for results in a healthier and more financially sound community as a whole. This bill (HB 6616) is an important step in the right direction, because it expands coverage to all immigrants up to the age of 26—a similar age bracket to that of the Affordable Care Act.

It's also important to realize that expanding HUSKY to undocumented persons is not a controversial move among voters. In CT, expanding HUSKY to all undocumented immigrants is supported by 57% of voters (84% of Democrats, 83% of Black voters, and 76% of Latinx voters). Here in CT, we care about people and families, we recognize the importance of access to healthcare for all, regardless of immigration status, and we encourage our leaders to pass laws that will move us in this direction.

When we have lost our ability to care for one another, we have lost our ability to be human. With this bill, we have an opportunity to exercise both our humanity and our practical fiscal concerns. I thank you for your time and ask that you please support this legislation to expand Husky to cover all people up the age of 26, regardless of immigration status. And moving forward, I would ask that this committee continue to work toward expanding Husky access to all immigrants, regardless of age.

Sincerely,

Laurel LaPorte-Grimes, PhD
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